

Marine Corps Civil Affairs: Just a Name, Not a Capacity

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"Taking combat arms officers and calling them civil affairs is just a name, not a capacity."¹ In November 2005, the Department of Defense (DoD) issued Directive 3000.05, *Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations*. The directive outlines stability operations as a core DoD mission and mandates the services allocate equal priority of "training, doctrine, organizations, education, exercises, material, leadership, personnel, facilities, and planning" to stability operations as it does to combat operations.² While the Marine Corps has taken steps to meet the intent of this directive, adequately prioritizing the creation of a permanent civil affairs (CA) capability is not one of them. Failure to address this critical shortfall with anything less than creation of an active duty civil affairs (CA) primary military occupational specialty (MOS) jeopardizes mission accomplishment in current and future operating environments.

BACKGROUND

The Marine Corps has made significant progress in preparing

¹ Steven M. Zotti, Colonel USMC, Director, Strategic Vision Group, Personal Interview, November 26, 2008.

² U.S. Department of Defense, *Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations Directive 3000.05*, Washington, D.C.: GPO, 2005.

for SSTR operations since September 11, 2001. Initiatives to increase its SSTR capabilities have included:

- Publishing *Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3-33.5, Counterinsurgency*³
- Enhancing pre-deployment training at MOJAVE VIPER
- Establishing the Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning (CAOCL)
- Integrating cultural instruction throughout the training and education system
- Designating civil military operations as an additional mission for the artillery community⁴
- Creating additional Foreign Affairs Officers (FAO)
- Creating limited numbers of active duty CA billets⁵
- Establishing the Marine Corps Training and Advisory Group (MCTAG) and the Advisor Training Group (ATG)

³ U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps, *MCWP 3-33.5 Counterinsurgency*, Washington, D.C.: GPO, 2006.

⁴ U.S. Marine Corps, *ALMAR 061/05 Assignment of Secondary Civil Military Operations Mission to the Artillery Regiments Battalions*, Washington D.C.: GPO, 2005.

⁵ Douglas I. Feiring, Lieutenant Colonel USMC, Branch Head, MMOA-5, Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Personal Interview, November 25, 2008.

Many of these initiatives have positively impacted the Marine Corps' performance in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, for a warfighting organization with a strong legacy of adapting to the demands of current and future conflict, these initiatives alone are not sufficient to meet current and anticipated requirements. While somewhat successful, many of these initiatives have not received doctrine, organizations, training, materiel, leadership, personnel, facilities (DOTMLPF) support to make them truly effective in supporting SSTR operations.

The Marine Corps has an operational shortfall of subject matter experts (SMEs) trained in the art and science of civil affairs. To compensate for the lack of organic CA expertise, the Marine Corps currently relies on reservists and ad-hoc⁶ operational units serving in a CA capacity. *Marine Corps Vision and Strategy 2025* predicts a future hybrid operating environment that will demand the ability to conduct conventional operations as well as security cooperation, nation building and partner capacity, and training and advising operations. Haiti. Nicaragua. Vietnam. Iraq. Afghanistan. These operations, past and present, have demonstrated that, "we need a much larger

⁶ Active duty CA teams deploying in support of operational units often report without training or expertise. Additionally, many teams must be sourced internally by the unit, further straining personnel shortages.

civil affairs capacity than we currently have planned for."⁷

CURRENT SHORTFALLS

Tasked with developing *Marine Corps Vision and Strategy* 2025, Colonel Steven M. Zotti, USMC, Director of the Strategic Vision Group emphasizes:

Building a capacity takes training, experience, and expertise that cannot be ad-hoced on the fly when needed... amphibious operations are not pick-up-and-go skills; it takes proficiency and training to be able to execute them. The same goes for stability operations. You can play the game, but unless you have expertise, you won't play it well.⁸

Although the Marine Corps is sufficiently filling the immediate requirement for additional civil affairs "bodies," it is not making changes that will create long-term solutions to fill the capability gap.

Active duty civil affairs billets are currently filled by Marines working outside their primary MOS. Three major problems exist with this system. First, no formal Marine Corps CA school exists to train selected personnel, nor is there a requirement to attend sister services' CA schools to obtain training.⁹ Personnel assigned to CA billets often report to their units

⁷ Christopher M. Fears, Lieutenant Colonel USMC, Civil Affairs Capabilities Integration Officer, MCCDC, Personal Interview, January 6, 2009.

⁸ Steven M. Zotti, Colonel USMC, Director, Strategic Vision Group, Personal Interview, November 26, 2008

⁹ The USA and USN have formal CA schools and allow Marine personnel to attend. However, because the MOS Manual does not require formal school attendance for assignment to CA billets, the responsibility for training the individual remains with the operational unit.

untrained. Should the unit desire to have their CA personnel trained prior to going to combat, operational commanders are responsible for funding. Security Cooperation Education and Training Center, Civil Military Operations branch (SCETC CMO) is currently in the process of developing a curriculum for a potential Marine Corps CA school and has recommended more stringent requirements to update the MOS Manual.¹⁰ Until approved, unfunded Army schools, uncertified Navy schools, and SCETC mobile training teams are the only available "official" training for the Marine Corps' CA personnel. Also, the only official requirement to obtain the additional MOS is on-the-job-training and a foreign affairs background.¹¹

Second, reservists fill the majority of civil affairs "surge" capacity. Reserve civil affairs groups (CAG) lack the ability to deploy as often as operationally required. "Civil Affairs Groups (CAG) are only authorized to activate as a unit once every five years."¹² Furthermore, although some CA reservists have civilian careers that closely mirror SSTR lines

¹⁰ Robert V. Carr, Lieutenant Colonel USMC, Branch Head, Security Cooperation and Education Center (SCETC) Civil Military Operations Branch, Personal Interview, January 6, 2009.

¹¹ Ibid. and U.S. Marine Corps, MCO 1200.17 Military Occupational Specialties (MOS) Marine Corps Manual(Short title: MOS Manual, Washington, D.C.: GPO, 2008.

¹² Scott S. Lacy, Lieutenant Colonel USMC, Occupational Field Sponsor, Marine Artillery, PP&O HQMC, Personal Interview, November 25, 2008.

of operation¹³ (governance, essential services, host nation security, civil security, and economic services), these Marines often lack the professional military education and experience needed to enable them to fully nest their efforts into the commander's campaign plan. The most important requirement for successful civil military operations (CMO) is the integration of CA effects with the intelligence preparation of the battlefield, planning, operations, targeting, and synchronization process. Based on the limited number of Marine reserve CAGs and the current and future operational requirement for CA capability, the Marine Corps is now challenged by the reality that "a significant amount of the artillery community has more operational experience in civil affairs than many individuals within the CAG."¹⁴

Third, the current Marine Corps promotion and manpower system keeps personnel in their primary MOS, gives second priority to filling additional MOS billets, and discourages extensive time away from primary duties.¹⁵ Because CA is an additional MOS, active duty personnel assigned to CA billets are

¹³ U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps, *MCWP 3-33.5 Counterinsurgency*, Washington, D.C.: GPO, 2006

¹⁴ Scott S. Lacy, Lieutenant Colonel USMC, Occupational Field Sponsor, Marine Artillery, PP&O HQMC, Personal Interview, November 25, 2008.

¹⁵ Douglas I. Feiring, Lieutenant Colonel USMC, Branch Head, MMOA-5, Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Personal Interview, November 25, 2008.

expected to return to their primary MOS following the tour.¹⁶ This leads to the loss of an investment in training, education, and experience. Without retaining experienced active duty civil affairs personnel, the CA community will never develop a proficient hierarchy of specialists able to advise at higher levels and to train at lower echelons. Unchanged, the Marine Corps will continue to have an ad-hoc "in-name-only" civil affairs capability, never a true capacity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Changes should begin now to allocate additional resources to prepare the Marine Corps for present and future hybrid wars. The first step in these changes is to establish a Marine Corps CA MOS school and require training for assignment to CA billets. Building a base of trained CA SMEs is key to establishing a permanent active duty CA occupational field. Initial and sustainment training should also include internships with the Department of State (DOS), United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and civilian public works experts, city assessment team leaders, civil engineers, city planners, and city governmental leaders.¹⁷ Sustainment

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Internships should be progressive by rank. i.e. Lts intern in small townships, Capts intern in mid-size towns, Majs intern in mid-size cities, LtCols intern in large metropolitan cities, Colonels intern with state and national

internships may be assigned in place of career and intermediate level school for officers to prevent too much time out of the operating forces.¹⁸

The next step is to create an active duty CA MOS for both officer and enlisted personnel. Officers and enlisted personnel should enter the occfield upon their initial entry into the Marine Corps to begin the process of building long-term capacity. Manpower should assign monitors to manage the staffing and career paths of personnel within the CA field and allocate equal priority to fill CA staffing goals.

The final step to increase capacity is to establish three active duty "CAG companies" within each Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF). The CAG companies should be resident within MEF Headquarters Group (MHG) to provide the most flexible and responsive support. These CAG companies should be employed similar to how Counter-intelligence Company uses Human Exploitation Teams (HET), allocating CA teams to MAGTF requirements.

governments. The recommendation on establishing a CA internship program is from LtCol Andrew J. Tate, USMC, XO 10th MarRegt during an interview with the author on January 16, 2009.

¹⁸ Andrew J. Tate, Lieutenant Colonel USMC. Executive Officer, 10th Marine Regiment. Personal Interview. January 16, 2009

OPPOSITION

Two main counterarguments exist against making CA a primary MOS. First, the Marine Corps has a finite amount of personnel, particularly in the officer corps. While several manpower, training, and occupational field (OCCFIELD) subject matter experts have expressed interest in creating an enlisted active duty CA MOS, they did not see the need to create an officer CA MOS pipeline.¹⁹ The opposition has argued the technical nature of many enlisted MOSSs requires specific education and training; however, officers are trained to be MAGTF planners and generalists.²⁰ Former Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Alfred M. Gray, has also argued against creating more MOSSs in the Marine Corps, especially for officers. General Gray has said, "The Marine Corps needs to scale down its number of MOSSs. We need Marines that can multi-task and perform multiple functions within the MAGTF." However, in the case of civil affairs, General Gray continued to say, "I do support creating a

¹⁹ Robert V. Carr, Lieutenant Colonel USMC, Branch Head, Security Cooperation and Education Center (SCETC) Civil Military Operations Branch, Personal Interview, January 6, 2009 and Douglas I. Feiring, Lieutenant Colonel USMC, Branch Head, MMOA-5, Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Personal Interview, November 25, 2008 and Scott S. Lacy, Lieutenant Colonel USMC, Occupational Field Sponsor, Marine Artillery, PP&O HQMC, Personal Interview, November 25, 2008.

²⁰ Scott S. Lacy, Lieutenant Colonel USMC, Occupational Field Sponsor, Marine Artillery, PP&O HQMC, Personal Interview, November 25, 2008.

permanent active duty CA MOS to increase our capacity.”²¹

The second counterargument contends that measures have already been taken to resolve the CA shortfall. This counterargument stems primarily from the Marine Corps creating 189 active duty civil affairs billets: 49 officer (0530) and 140 enlisted (0530) and officially assigning Marine artillery the additional mission essential task (MET) of CMO. These initiatives are a good starting point. However, CA billets have received, and continue to receive, second priority on staffing.²² Also, although Marine artillery leaders are embracing the additional CMO MET²³, additional training, restructuring, and personnel are needed within the artillery community²⁴ to limit creating a generation of officers and enlisted personnel with little to no experience in their primary mission.²⁵ Further, relying on the artillery community to provide the majority of the Marine Corps’ CA capability is unsustainable in many future

²¹ Alfred M. Gray Jr., General USMC, Former Commandant of the Marine Corps 1987-1991, Quatrefoil Meeting, December 1, 2008.

²² John P. Flynn, Major USMC, CSS Majors Monitor, e-mail message to author, December 8, 2008.

²³ Scott S. Lacy, Lieutenant Colonel USMC, Occupational Field Sponsor, Marine Artillery, PP&O HQMC, Personal Interview, November 25, 2008.

²⁴ Jonathan P. Dunne, Major USMC, “Transformation of Marine Corps Artillery in Support of the 2015 Expeditionary Force.” Master of Military Studies(2008): <http://www.proquest.com/en-US/>.

²⁵ Scott S. Lacy, Lieutenant Colonel USMC, Occupational Field Sponsor, Marine Artillery, PP&O HQMC, Personal Interview, November 25, 2008.

hybrid war scenarios, where battlefield success will likely demand employing artillery against an enemy on one block, while a simultaneously conducting SSTR on another block. In fact, the Marine Corps is experiencing this dilemma presently, as it prepares to shift focus to the hybrid war in southern Afghanistan.²⁶

Opinions against creating an active duty CA MOS are understandable. However, the United States has initiated SSTR operations an average of every 18-24 months since the end of the Cold War.²⁷ Secretary of Defense, Robert M. Gates, recently wrote:

Even with a better-funded State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development, future military commanders will not be able to rid themselves of the tasks of maintaining security and stability. To truly achieve victory as Clausewitz defined it -- to attain a political objective -- the United States needs a military whose ability to kick down the door is matched by its ability to clean up the mess and even rebuild the house afterward.²⁸

With this endstate as the goal, the Marine Corps' planned 202K CA additions will not meet the anticipated future hybrid war requirements. In addition, the current plan limits the Marine

²⁶ Scott A. Cuomo, Captain, USMC, conversation with the author, February 20, 2009.

²⁷ U.S. Marine Corps, *Institutionalizing Civil Affairs in the Marine Corps DRAFT Position Paper*, MCCDC, (Quantico: GPO, 2007).

²⁸ Robert M. Gates, "A Balanced Strategy: Reprogramming the Pentagon for a New Age," *Foreign Affairs* (2009): <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20090101faessay88103/robert-m-gates/a-balanced-strategy.html?mode=print>

Corps' ability to conduct CA operations when artillery units must act in a conventional role and cannot simultaneously meet CA capacity requirements.

CONCLUSION

The Marine Corps has a legendary reputation as a lethal, expeditionary, and adaptable military organization. It should never seek to become a solely SSTR force. However, a recent article about the need to restructure the Pentagon, Secretary Gates emphasized:

The United States cannot kill or capture its way to victory...kinetic operations should be subordinated to measures aimed at promoting better governance, economic programs that spur development, and efforts to address the grievances among the discontented... Capabilities needed to deal with these scenarios cannot be considered exotic distractions or temporary diversions. The United States does not have the luxury of opting out because these scenarios do not conform to preferred notions of the American way of war.²⁹

It is time for the Marine Corps to stop taking half-steps to meet these requirements and to make the investment to develop an active duty civil affairs capacity.

1889 WORDS

²⁹ Robert M. Gates, "A Balanced Strategy: Reprogramming the Pentagon for a New Age," *Foreign Affairs* (2009): <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20090101faessay88103/robert-m-gates/a-balanced-strategy.html?mode=print>.

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